1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia



hundred, are deeply religious and lay great stress on being "Christian people." Many of the older inhabitants were formerly slaves on a large plantation on St. Catherines Island. After the War between the States many of these Negroes moved to White Bluff, built their homes, reared their families, and have lived to see two generations reach maturity. With all their fervent Christian doctrines the old people have an unwavering faith in many of the beliefs taught them by their grandparents. A few remember their ancestors who were brought from Africa on slave ships.

The younger group seem carefree as they perform their tasks in the cool part of the morning. It is not unusual to see several young men lying on a shady porch resting or happily engaged in a card game as early as ten o'clock on a summer morning. These young people have little faith in the practices of their elders, but they believe profoundly in the power of certain charms to affect luck and love.[6]

Having heard that Sophie Davis was one of the oldest persons in the community, we visited her and found her cordial in her reception. Sophie * does not know her exact age, but was eight at the time of the war. She is very short and very stout with gray hair and a very large smiling face. The day we saw her she wore a cotton print dress with gray predominating. Her sparkling eyes expressed her interest in current happenings of the community, and when she laughed, her eyes became mere slits and her shoulders shook.

Indicating a small bush growing beside the doorway of her little cabin, Sophie told us, "Some uh duh folks heah sho belieb in some queah tings. Yuh see dis lill bush—it call Cherokee an mos uh duh folks yuh plants it at duh doe. It bring um good luck.[34c] Lot uh medicine an cuos is made frum udduh roots and herbs an some uh duh folks uses um wen dey's sick." [48]

We inquired as to the kind of herbs used.

* *Sophie Davis, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

# *Sandfly*

SANDFLY, ABOUT NINE MILES SOUTHEAST OF SAVANnah, is a scattered Negro community spreading through the hot pine barrens to the Isle of Hope. There is nothing unusual or outstanding about the sleepy little settlement; its three hundred inhabitants appear to lead a placid, uneventful existence.

Many of the houses are situated on a side road which leads to the Isle of Hope. Modern conveniences are lacking, but the nondescript dwellings are brightened by flower gardens in the front yards, while small truck gardens occupy the space to the rear and sides. The more substantial houses of the more prosperous citizens are set deep in the wooded sections and are reached by means of narrow winding paths bordered with giant moss-hung oak trees.

Usually life in Sandfly flows along pleasantly and without serious interruption. Even in the morning men and women sit around on porches or in yards, sometimes talking, sometimes dozing in the sun. The more industrious are at work in the gardens or may be seen through doors busily occupied in washing or ironing clothes. Many of the men are employed as fishermen or day laborers, and the women who work out are generally engaged as house servants in homes at near-by Isle of Hope.

At first residents of the community were reluctant to talk about their superstitions and beliefs and their knowledge of conjure. Their customary response when first approached was a laconic, "No, ma'am, I ain got no fait in sech tings as

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

# *Wilmington Island*

115 UNCLE JACK TATTNALL* AND UNCLE ROBERT PINCK-
226 ney ** are river men. For many years they have earned a frugal living by casting for shrimp or crabbing or fishing in the Wilmington River. Apparently they are in little fear of the elements. Winter or summer, at whatever hour of the day or night the tide is "right," they are on the water in their bateaux.

311 Many of the Wilmington Island Negroes depend upon the
• 461 river for their livelihood. In leisure hours, here as in other sections, skillful fingers carve or weave to pass the time away.
322 We were fortunate in being shown a walking stick (Plate
532 IIb),[A] carved some years before by an old fisherman of the
481 island.† The delicately detailed figure of a human being formed a third of the stick, with hair, features, fingers, and shoes carefully executed. The narrow thin figure stood stiffly gowned in a garment edged with a saw-tooth design.

124 For some time we had been anxious to obtain interviews with Uncle Jack and Uncle Robert, who were among the oldest inhabitants of Wilmington Island, in order that we might learn something regarding beliefs and customs that had been handed down to them. Until the present time, we had met with little success.

124 A barbecue to be held in the side yard of Celia Small, one
114 of the islanders, at last gave us the long hoped for opportunity of meeting a number of the residents at one time.

* *Jack Tattnall, Wilmington Island.*
** *Robert Pinckney, Thunderbolt.*
† *Property of Edward A. Sieg, 128 West Jones Street, Savannah.*



A, [See Category 322, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia



helter-skelter about the enclosure. There was some wire fencing, but dogs, cats, chickens, a litter of very young puppies, and an old rooster roamed at will. Sunning themselves against a cabin wall were two old women, and from the windows of another cabin popped the heads of three curious younger women. An open door suddenly gave forth several children, smiling and scantily clad, shining eyes and surprised faces upturned to the strangers.

The two elderly women rose and came forward to greet us. Our guide explained our mission and inquired as to the whereabouts of Uncle Ben Washington, with whom we wished to talk. Aunt Sarah,* who was Uncle Ben's wife, explained that her husband had gone to work in the woods early that morning.

A glance at the dense forest surrounding the little clearing convinced us that Uncle Ben would be unlikely to hear the halloos with which our guides were attempting to summon him.

Just as we were about to abandon the venture a unique figure appeared inside the fence and Reuben Taylor, the older of our guides, exclaimed, "Deah's Uncle Ben now." Uncle Ben** appeared in a long frock coat and high felt hat, carrying a walking stick. It was difficult to understand how he could have worked in such a costume. He seemed young for the eighty-five years he claimed, for he moved about with considerable agility.

As he drew nearer, Aunt Sarah went forward to greet him and the two old people came toward us together. When we again explained about the information we were seeking, Uncle Ben said with grave courtesy that he was glad to have visitors.

Thinking of the precarious journey that lay behind us and wondering how far from the main road this little settlement

*Sarah Washington, in the pine woods about five miles from Eulonia.
**Ben Washington, in the pine woods about five miles from Eulonia.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

# *Possum Point*

A WINDING TREE-SHADED DIRT ROAD LEADS FROM Darien up the Altamaha to the Negro community of Possum Point. The freshets in the section rise in the rainy season and the road is often flooded. On either side the trees are mirrored in the shallow water which surrounds them. In the spring against the fresh green of the trees and foliage there is the soft color of wild honeysuckle and Cherokee Rose. Through the thickly-massed trees the sun filters dimly; a misty, unreal atmosphere overhangs the entire scene.

Set back from the roadway are occasional small dwelling places, with boards turned dun-colored from age and exposure. Neatly tended vegetable and flower gardens stretch out to the front and sides of the houses. The owners can be found industriously working in the gardens, sitting on the porches, or gathered in little groups along the road. Here and there small bridges span the road, and at each of these a number of persons are often seen leisurely fishing, their long bamboo poles forming graceful arcs from the bank to the water.

We had been told that Alec Anderson was an old man and one who would be able to enlighten us regarding the beliefs prevalent in that section. We stopped a few times to inquire where he lived. After continuing for several miles, the road turned to the right. It swerved again a short distance later and continued in a narrow, uneven pathway through the woods. This section was but sparsely settled and we glimpsed a cabin only now and then.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

## SAPELO ISLAND

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of
491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through
the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are de-
•461 scendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an
easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing,
and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage
in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company
offices.

178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have
preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as
well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart
[493] (Plate XVI)[A] jogging along a tree shaded road is a familar
[412] sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius
we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in com-
[124] mon usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic
picture of survival elements that have persisted since the
days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new
country.

115 One of the oldest inhabititants is Katie Brown (Plate
XV),[B]* whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of
Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas
Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her
small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her
[123] head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive to
conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco
and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long
534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.
527 Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times.[33]
Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum,
rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin
plates.[33, 35] Dey shout an moob roun in succle an look lak
mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

* *Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.*



A, [See Category 493, plate following p. xxxii-U--Analyst]
B, [See Category 142, plates following p. xxxii-Q and R--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



early twentieth century.[2] Thus they are quite naturally suspicious of anyone taking notes, carrying equipment, or wandering about unaccompanied by a resident. The islanders are a proud, perceptive people and can very soon sense insincerity and patronizing attitudes. It generally requires more than an offer of cash payment, gifts, or other remunerations to motivate them to assist a researcher's study. Though it was not my original plan to become indoctrinated into Sea Island culture through hard labor, I learned very quickly that most of the islanders are active, "going" people. Those who are not engaged in city jobs are likely to be fishermen, farmers, carpenters, housewives, basket weavers, market people, or laborers in the produce fields. Often workers allowed me to accompany and assist them, and I found that the rewards for becoming involved in daily life through hard work were great indeed. Returning home from a day in the fields in an open-bed truck, listening to the islanders laughing, joking, and planning for the weekend, made the tasks I had accomplished that day seem easier. Equally important, I obtained some of the most interesting speech data while learning to make baskets or working in an okra field.

After five years of gathering information on the Sea Islands, I went to Africa in 1978 to compare the Sea Islanders' language and culture with the patterns of some of their ancestors. The Nigerian villagers' welcome was far warmer on my first introduction to their communities than the Sea Islanders' had been. Many of the elderly Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio women had never seen an African-American woman and walked some distances to see the *Indocha*, or what was termed a "white-black woman." The label was used not out of disrespect but for lack of a better one to refer to a person born from African heritage but raised speaking a European tongue. After I explained my purpose for coming far "across the water," I was never in need of anyone to assist in any efforts. The villagers were as eager to hear what words, customs, and traditions the Gullah speakers retained as I was to tell them. Their eagerness was sharpened by their fervent hope that somehow some of the language, literary traditions, and social customs had derived from their particular culture, whether Igbo, Yoruba, or Ibebio. Life among these people was fascinating and amazingly similar in some ways to the life patterns of the Sea Islanders, even after the passage of centuries. It is about these similarities in language, literature, and culture that I promised to write this book.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



skilled speakers as well as dancers and singers, while women are expected to be responders, doing the clapping and rhetorical backup. Though some women do tell tales, they most often do so in the privacy of their homes when the men are away. Likewise, the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio women seldom tell tales in the company of men, although alone, or in the company of other women and children, some of the Sea Island and African women are avid storytellers.

On occasions when a storytelling contest was held at the community store during my stays on the islands, many women came to hear the stories, though few of them actually told tales themselves. Miss Myma, the elderly Sea Island lady with whom I resided and who accompanied me to most preplanned telling sessions, always told the first tale, but more in an effort to sanction and add approval to the occasion than as a traditional practice. Several women with whom I had spent time over a seven-year period came to the storytelling contest but bluntly refused to tell any stories. After the session ended and the men were awarded the prizes by the island judges, these women approached me and asked that I come by their homes the following day. I did so and was told many tales, as well as given many folk remedies, cures, and songs. One lady, highly respected in the community, permitted me to hold two storytelling contests at her home. However, she refused to come outside to listen to the tales because the audience was comprised primarily of men. I learned that women are not expected to participate in activities that are considered primarily male-oriented activities. Within the Sea Islands as well as within certain African communities, only women who are elderly or held in fairly high social esteem can participate in such activities without fear of censure.

Most of the tales told by women and elderly men are told during the daylight hours just after lunch when they take a break from the daily chores just to "catch some breeze" or "sit in the cool." One elderly gentleman, nearly one hundred years old now, often entertained me for hours with tales, historical events, and reminiscences before he resumed his afternoon plowing with his favorite mule. This man is particularly interesting because he firmly believes that a man should live apart from his wife and family. Until his wife's death very recently, she lived in a fairly large, modern dwelling with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren while he lived in his shanty located behind the main house and near the other homes within his yard area. His wife prepared his meals and brought them to him at

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



592 593 mealtimes and then returned to her own home. Since her death, his granddaughter has continued the practice.

538 Another elderly friend and informant often sat in the hallway of his shanty, with the front and back doors open to let the breeze flow through the house, and told of Ber Rabbit and times past in vivid detail. Sometimes it seemed that Ber Rabbit was indeed a real character to him, one he had actually encountered and greeted on his many journeys down Sea Island paths.

538 179 The Sea Island children are aware of the "old-time stories" such as those about Ber Rabbit and his many companions, but most under the age of twelve told me stories that they had learned in school, and not those characteristic of the Sea Island tradition. Television and improved educational facilities account in part for this change. However, the skill in telling and the ability to retain the old-time stories appear to be related to the degree of modernization of the island. On the more remote islands, including Wadmalaw and Daufuski, many children are avid and skillful storytellers in the old tradition.

538 857 171 Nonetheless, few Sea Island children between the ages of eight and twelve can match the skill and intricate detail in description that the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio children display in captivating an audience and unraveling a tale. Though color television is a common sight in Nigerian cities like Lagos, Aba, Owerri, Calabar, and Eket, the village children are far less likely to have access to television or radio. As would be expected, these children are far more expert in the art of telling a story than even Nigerian city children, probably because village children are still gathered and told stories frequently as a form of entertainment.

538 517 461 Anytime was a good time for the African children to tell stories. But, as on the Sea Islands, the best stories were told in the late evening around the fire sites when a good group had come together to relax and be entertained after the activities of the day were ended.

## The Audience

596 Today, as noted earlier, the extended family is still a practiced tradition on the Sea Islands. The inhabitants, like their West African forebears, seem to be communal people. They live in close proximity

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



never get to heaven. Gullah soldiers sang a song about the black driver during the Civil War. White witnesses thought the song appeared "quite secular in its character, yet its author called it a 'spiritual' ":

> Fust ting my mammy tell me,
> O' gwine away!
> Tell me bout de nigger-driver,
> O' gwine away!
> Nigger-driver second debil. . . .

The relationship between the missionary's observation and the "spiritual" further illustrates how Gullahs viewed slave drivers. One driver, "noted as a good Negro, and a Methodist," had heard since his childhood that no driver could ever get to heaven, "and they need not try, for none . . . could see God's face in peace." The distraught man told a Methodist missionary, " 'to that tree every night I want to pray; at last God, for Christ sake, pardoned my sins.' " The black driver became fully convinced that " 'Christ is able to save a driver as well as anybody else.' " And he hoped, said the missionary, to hold out faithfully so that " 'people will see at least one driver in heaven.' "[39]

The type of bondage experienced by the Gullahs was related to the Lowcountry's settlement as well as the staple crops produced. The colony of Carolina was settled by West Indian planters who created a system of slavery notorious for maltreatment of black laborers. One individual, a German, traveling through the Carolina Lowcountry after the American Revolution, observed that:

> The condition of the Carolina negro slaves is in general harder and more troublous . . . wretched food, more work, tedious work, harsh and cynical treatment at the hands of owners and overseers. There is less concern here as to their moral betterment . . . proof is in the fact that they do not multiply . . . numbers are refreshed thru importations.[40]

The continued harshness of the system was maintained. After indigo cultivation, both South Carolina and Georgia became absorbed in cotton culture. Although not as backbreaking as indigo, Sea Island cotton extracted a heavy toll from black workers in many ways. The staple needed a tremendous amount of labor and laborers, especially after 1820 when the international market value of fine cotton soared. On an average plantation, fifty to sixty days of labor per slave were required to produce one bale of fine Sea Island cotton. The crop required more hoeing than short-

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



staple cotton, a different type of picking, which had to be done from only slightly opened bolls, and a painstaking preparation for the staple market in the ginning process. Men were usually responsible for seed extraction of Sea Island cotton. Jenkins Mikell of the Peters Point Plantation, Edisto Island, gave an account of this activity on his father's estate:

> The operation was long, tedious and fatiguing. It was done on gins operated by foot, a crude plantation, or domestic device for getting out the seed from the lint—one man to a gin. He would stand on his left leg and work a crank-like arrangement, somewhat like a crank that drives a sewing machine, first with his right foot, then when he got tired . . . he would hop on his right foot and work his gin with his left foot—never stopping his gin as he changed. . . . As each man has thirty pounds of lint cotton to gin out for his day's work, he has no time to loaf.[41]

Sea Island slave women also performed arduous, monotonous, and fatiguing work on the plantations. The crop was harvested from late September through December, a cold, damp part of the year on the coast. Women and boys were considered the best pickers, though all field hands would be ordered out at first harvest. As soon as enough cotton was gathered, ginning began which took many men away from the fields. Women pickers worked rapidly yet carefully, so not to bruise the delicate fibers for this would affect the grade. Sea Island planter William Elliott maintained that "the greatest care is used by them to separate from the cotton, all dried leaves or other substances that may impair or discolour." While "prime, young and strong" women engaged in this activity, the elderly, "less sturdy" women and those near their time of childbirth worked in the gin house. They thrashed or "whipped" seed cotton to further remove loose sand or dirt then passed it on to "assorters." This group of women stood before long tables and divided the lint according to color and fineness. From there men received the "assorted" seed cotton for seed extraction. Once this was accomplished, women "moters" inspected and divided the cotton once again, removing fibers stained by the black cotton seed crushed by the gin. Finally, before packing, the cotton was subjected to one final inspection at the "mote table."[42]

The whole process created a tenseness which everyone experienced. A driving momentum was kept up, but quality work was insisted upon since that was the key to the lint's value. Activities were coordinated so

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



that cotton did not lie around or be stored after picking since too much exposure injured the product. Some overseers worked the slaves at night and on Sundays. The rawness and wetness of the weather did not deter managers and planters from ordering all "available" hands out to the fields. Though work in the gin house was considered "light" work, this "cotton barn" offered little relief from cold and dampness. The air inside was so unhealthy that slaves preferred the openness of the fields. Workers breathed flying lint and dust during the long hours as they labored in standing positions.[43]

The labor had a telling effect on the slave women's physical health. A callous attitude developed toward needs of pregnant women, postpartum illnesses, infant care, exhaustion and exposure to inclement weather. Bondswoman Susannah, in relating to Laura Towne, the tragedy of having all three of her living sons sold away, mentioned that she had actually had twenty-two pregnancies. Another defiant Gullah woman who worked in the house was beaten frequently by order of the mistress and retaliated by bringing "not one nigger" to Maussa. Another woman was buried up to her neck in earth as punishment, a few days after she had given birth to a stillborn child. Laura Towne, who saw signs of illtreatment, recorded various accounts:

> On this place, the Oaks, Loretta showed me her back, arms and breasts today. In many places there were ridges as high and long as my little finger and everywhere marks of the whip. She said that her children had been killed in her by whipping. She says it was because when "heavy with child," she could not do the full task of a field hand. I suspect also being rather apt to resist and rather smart in speaking her mind, poor thing. She has suffered terribly and it is no wonder that she is more indifferent about her clothes and house. . . . She says this was "de cruelest place."

Loretta lived on the plantation of Daniel Pope, a member of the Sea Island Baptist "aristocracy" who "gave no shoes, salt, molasses, nor Sunday clothes . . . neither would he allow the field hands any meat, nor permit them to raise pigs." In the year before the Civil War Pope determined to make the people work as much as possible, "so he kept them in the field from morning till night and lashed them every day."[44]

Francis Kemble noted on her visit to the Georgia Sea Islands that the principal hardships fell to the lot of the women. She wrote of her first visit to the "Infirmary":

> Women lay prostrate on the floor, without bed, mattress or pillow, buried in tattered and filthy blankets. . . . I stood in the midst of them, perfectly unable

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



lak white man's," that is, with no marks of the whip. "Talk o' lick um sar?" answered one slave when queried about floggings, "yes, sar, nebber did noffin but lick um sar." He insisted that they were whipped when they didn't work and "when we work, hard lick um all same sar." A "devil" for cruelty was Alviro Fripp who "before he got religion use to cuss and cuss and cuss." But when he joined the Baptist church, he could no longer cuss, "so he used to lick 'em instead." The "richest man on St Helena," Edgar Fripp, was reportedly the meanest, and his temper knew no bounds at "full moon." He also worked his slaves all night in full moon at cotton-picking time. The Gullahs went out of their way to avoid him for if a hat was not tipped quick enough or a bow low enough, Fripp would "lay his horsewhip on them well."[60]

Of the many cases of harsh treatment and sometimes actual barbarity, few compared with the 1849 incident recorded by Thomas Chaplin in his Journal. Chaplin's neighbor, James Sandiford, was brought before an inquest of planters regarding the death of his slave, Roger. In examining the slaves' remains, Chaplin wrote that "such a shocking sight never before met my eyes." The slave, a born cripple who "used his knees more than his feet," had been instructed, on a "cold and bitter day," to paddle a boat downriver for oysters and then to cut a bundle of mud marsh. Roger, instructed to return before "high water," did not show up until "ebb tide." But he brought back seven baskets of oysters and a small bundle of marsh. "That," commented Chaplin, "was more than the primest of my fellows would have done." But Sandiford gave Roger thirty lashes for not returning sooner, for not cutting more marsh, and for hollering loudly while being flogged for the first two offenses. Sandiford later eavesdropped on a conversation Roger had in the kitchen with another man. Two versions of the exchange were reported. According to the planter, Roger stated that if he had "sound limbs" he would shoot down a white man before he took a flogging. The man to whom Roger spoke denied this, informing the jurors that Roger said "he would turn his back on them if they shot him down," which Chaplin believed was the truth. Neither comment, in Chaplin's opinion, warranted the punishment Roger received:

> For these *crims*, this man, this demon in human shape, this pretended Christian, member of the Baptist Church, had this poor cripple Negro placed in an open outhouse, the wind blowing through a hundred cracks, his clothes wet to the waist, without a single blanket & in freezing weather, with his back against the

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

342
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*Women and children in the evening after "Massa's" task is done. (Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York.)*

[p. 304]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



175 567 112

*American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 118–20. See also Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 371–74, 386–88.

39. Towne Diary, 10; Edward Philbrick to Dr. L. B. Russell, June 15, 1863, Edward Atkinson Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 210–211; *SCA*, August 11, 1843.

175 113

40. Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1769 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Johann Schöepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783–84*, trans. Alfred Morrison (Philadelphia: W. J. Campbell, 1911), 220–21.

175 567 248 461 113

41. Lucius Gaston Moffatt and Joseph Médard Carrière, "A Frenchman Visits Charleston, 1817," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 2 (April, 1948): 141; Johnson, *Social History*, 22–29; Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 19–20; R. F. W. Allston, "Sea Coast Crops of the South," *Debow's Review*, XVI (January–June, 1854): 596–98; William Elliot, "On Cultivation of Sea Island Cotton," *Southern Agriculturalist* I (April, 1828): 154; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 70, 72; Crum, *Gullah*, 233–34; U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966, repr. from 1918 ed.), 153–54, 223–25. Philip Morgan takes a different view. He argues that Sea Island cotton cultivation resulted in less arduous slave labor and that the task system augmented black independence and autonomy. See his "Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Low Country," *Journal of Southern History*, no. 3 (August, 1983): 399–405, and "Black Society in the Low Country," 106–7, 120–21.

42. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 19–20; Allston, "Sea Coast Crops of the South," 596–98; Fripp Diary, passim; J. A. Turner, ed., *The Cotton Planter's Manual* (New York: Negro Universities Press, repr. from 1867 ed.) 135–36; Elliott, "Sea Island Cotton," 154; Thomas Lagare, "Preparation of Sea Island Cotton," *Southern Agriculturalist* II, ser. 2 (December, 1842): 626–27; R. King to P. Butler, October 31, 1824, December 5, 1824, box 33, folder 1, and March 1, 1835, box 33, fol. 5, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, HSP; Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, "A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton," *Proceedings of the Agricultural Convention and State Agricultural Society of South Carolina* (Charleston: Miller & Browne, 1844), 30; Diary of William F. Allen, 82–83 in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 71–73.

17 567 113 [248] [461]

43. Fripp Diary, passim; Towne Diary, 10, 20, 24, 32–33; R. King to P. Butler, Oct. 19, 24, and 31, 1824, box 33, fol. 1, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, HSP; Kemble, *Journal*, 174–75, 182–83, 189–92, 226–27, 233, 251, 263–64; King, Jr., "Management of Butler Estate," 3–4; Seabrook, "Memoir on Cotton," 30–31; Johnson, *Social History*; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters From Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, repr., 1969, repr. from 1906 ed.), 13, 31, 114; Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*; The Port Royal Experiment (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 126–27.

44. Allen Diary, 136, 91; Towne Diary, 33.

45. Kemble, *Journal*, 120–21, 182–83, 189–205, 214, 226–27, 233, 263.

46. Ibid., 135–36, 79–80.

47. Coffin Point Records Overseer report for 1818, SCHS; Fripp Diary, passim; Crum, *Gullah*, 244–45; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 291; Pinckney, *Address*, 23–24 (Appendix); Johnson, *Social History*, 28–29, 106; W. E. B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969; repr. from 1896 ed.), 180–86; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1878), 198; Federal Writers Program, Georgia, *Drums and Shadows* (Westport, Conn.:

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

*Mrs. Betsy Pinckney*

## YOU GOT TO WORK LIKE THE DEVIL

159 46 241 Oh Jesus, that hoe! When I married to Josh, I couldn't lift the ground. Didn't know nothing 'bout lift ground. Josh, he work in the field. Milk the cow, then plow, man, plow. Sometime he dig the bed so wide if you reach your hoe, you better have a good long hoe stick.

(429) (492) We used to work for our rent and our food. You got to work like the Devil! Plant your cotton. Plant your corn. You have to work five task for that land and that house. Take oxen and plow. You have to work that 'fore you work your crop. That's you house. That's the rent. If he calls every week, you'll have to go.

159 (412) In 1918 we move to our own place, where I am now. Josh go in the road and cut all them bush. Work with the ax and hoe. Some people carry the ax, some carry the hoe. Chop them bush. Cleared out the way for the cart and buggy come down. Then we had a crowd of children in there. And we had 'tato. When you throw 'em on the ground, just like somebody throwing dice on the floor. I had eleven head of children. And every one of my children had children. With the grands and the great-grands I have a hundred and forty-odd.

*Mr. Willie Hunter*

## WE RAISE GOOD THAT TIME

I was raised right around here. Know the Bligens long before I ever marry they daughter. I know Bligen long time. My wife. All nice people. If they weren't nice people, I don't go in their family, I be in some other family. Nice people, man.

159 519 They like me too. 'Cause I have plenty manners to them. Course I raise up that way, 'cause I raise up through the old school. Plenty manners. You had to have manners to them old people that time, 'cause in that time anybody could of lick you, you been sassy with any people. But now, we don't do that.

159 See if anybody lick me, outside my aunt what raise me, if I go home and tell Auntie that somebody lick me, I get some *more* lick. The best thing I do, keep my mouth shut and take what I get. Oh we raise good that time. Now things changed a whole lot. But I try to raise my children like I was raised.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

*Mrs. Alice Wine*

## I CAN'T STAND TOO MUCH SITTING DOWN

159
461 If I be sitting down and don't have nothing to do, I get stove up. I get painful and lazy. I can't stand too much sitting down. I likes to go. You must be always active. You miss and sit around all day, lay around all night, you're so painful 'til you can't hardly get up. But you be working all the time, get (826) your nerve together, get your vein together, then your muscle won't lock. Lot of people muscles lock by sitting down so much. No sit down for me. I likes to go.

I do any kind of job. I can plow, I can cut wood, I can sew, I can iron, I can scrub, I can do any kind of work in the field.

159
512 My husband was a farmer. He was a market man. He run a big farm. We have plenty chickens, plenty cow—two cow, and hogs. He get up and go to the market 'round two-thirty in the morning. Then I get up, put my baby to sleep, and get out there. Sometime we have these Columbia truck come in all time of night. These white people come in and carry these cabbage and thing. I'd be out there with them around four o'clock in the morning. After they go I come back to the house to see about the baby, then get in the tub and wash. Do all my washing, do my house cleaning, cook meals, have meals on time, cut cabbage, crate 'em too, pack 'em too.

159 I'm gone through a rough deal, but I thank God I'm still living. And I was doing those things in my nineteen and twenties. I'm fifty-nine now. So I'm not no baby!

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

*Mrs. Janie Hunter*

STORIES

517
● 461
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When we was small, we didn't 'low to go no place, but we have all we fun at home. On weekend when we do all work what told to us and after we finish work at night, we sit down and we all sing different old song, and parents teach us different game and riddles. We go and cut the wood and wrap up the house with green oak and muckle wood, then we all stays by the fire chimbley and listen to stories.

491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
346 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
461 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
476 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
493 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
368 distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
794 mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
793 morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
794 minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
794 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
571 of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
595 ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
527 music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
873 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

159 telling why there are not more of his generation around now to keep company he says "en d last years I ca'n waak lik I en d past. Dey'll be many mo ob ma time round here da dae, butbiln d white man's bridges and railroad kill musa us out. Wen dem come from d railroad waak dey body wae dead. I tri ta tel dem ta lern to make lik waak, but dey mules n at age fifty dey was tiad ole men. Oderwize dey'll be many mo ob ma people vote me tadae."

159 •461 Reverend Gripe.--The right Reverend Gripe differentiated between human and inhuman labor. Born in 1893, this man refused to work for the large white farmers. He worked and maintained his own land, but when there was an extra penny in "fightin d white man field" he refused. Once he went to lime house store (Captain Limehouse, the head of a powerful family in the area) to buy steak meat. Captain Limehouse a noted nigger whipper asked "where a nigger git steak money?" The six foot three inch two hundred plus pound Reverend Gripe replied "by not waakin ya fields," at which Limehouse laughed and dismissed the Reverend as crazy. Taking insult the Reverend jumped in his new Nash automobile and went then and thereafter to the city for his steak meat.

177 RACE RELATIONS ON THE ISLANDS

Now with bridges and interconnecting paved roadways

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



192
[804]
[461]

*Tetch*, for remnant. "T'engk Gawd, 'e lef' uh leetle tetch een de bottle."

*Tas'* (*task*), one hundred and five feet square, one quarter of an acre, the daily task on sea-island cotton plantations.[a] Used now as either a measure of area or of distance. "My gun kin shoot two tas'," i.e. 210 feet or 70 yards.

*Use* in the sense of "frequent certain feeding grounds, be accustomed to go, linger habitually about."[b]

*Yowe* for ewe.

*Frail*, to strike, to beat.

*Ax* for ask.[c]

*Piggin*, a small cedar pail with one panel extended for a handle.

*Pyo'* for "pure," in the sense of "fully, absolutely"; modern slang, "nothing else but": *de pyo' nutt'n*.

*Staa't-naked*, instead of "stark-naked."[d]

*Quile* for coil.

*Find*, in the sense of "to supply with victuals." "Buh Sun promise Buh Fowl-hawk fuh fine um een bittle effn 'e ketch 'im een 'im baid."

*Quills*, still used for pipes of reed or cane.

*Shote*, for young hog.

*Killick*, for "killock," an anchor of stone.

*Gaul* for swamp.

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[a] Mr. Bennett explains a "task" as one-half an acre for a hoe hand; three-quarters of an acre for a cotton-field hand; one-quarter of an acre for a rice-field hand. Thus a man and his family can *cut a tass; tie a tass, an' carry a tass intuh de flat*. From this comes the phrase, a *done-tass niggah*, for a worn out laborer, too weak or too old to work; or lightly, for the laughing darkey, his day's work done and his hoe canted over his shoulder. I. 343.

[b] Widely employed throughout the South by both white and black, usually as a hunting term in connection with doves, partridges, and turkeys. Dignified Elizabethan. Compare Spenser's "Where never foot did use", and Milton's Lycidas,

"Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use,
Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks."

Listed along with *quile* (coil) and *gaum* as colloquial white usage by Charles Foster Smith in "Southern Dialect in Life and Literature," *The Southern Bivouac*, Nov., 1885.

[c] Good Chaucerian and Caxtonian; standard English till 1600; still used in the Midland and Southern Dialects in England; and in general much easier and pleasanter to say than "ask".

[d] It is barely possible (but highly improbable) that *staa't* goes back to the older "start" (steort), tail.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



be recognized as African. However, the æsthetic taste of the race, which expressed itself in Africa in ceremonial dances, in song, and in carvings, had less opportunity for expression in the utilitarian lives led by the slaves.

Olmstead reports that "it is interesting to find in what ways the creative instinct continued to manifest itself," and goes on to quote a prominent Virginia planter as saying that his Negroes "never worked so hard as to tire themselves—always were lively and ready for a frolic at night." As in Africa, every possible piece of work was done to song; and it probably did not take the slave-owners long to discover that the output was greater when leaders with a gift for rhythm were appointed to regulate the work of gangs of laborers. Nor is it surprising that the slaves were expert blacksmiths, when it is remembered that Africa since time immemorial has worked in iron. Her deposits were so rich and so near the surface that comparatively simple methods were required to make the ore available. On this account certain tribes have always been skilled in iron-work, and the reason for the excellence of the famous grilles, balconies, and railings made by the slaves of New Orleans is obvious.

George D. Lowe, editor of the *Baxley Banner*, tells of a Georgia slave who could take a blackgum log and cut from it a perfect screw for the old-type cotton press, and also cut the opposite thread for the follower block—all this without laying out a line on the log, just using his eye. Mr. Lowe says: "There was another Negro slave owned in Twiggs county who was a famous stairbuilder, and his owner rented him out to men building fine homes as far away as Mississippi. . . . I have heard it said that he built at least one hundred stairways, never using a plan, but producing curved lines that no modern builder has approached in graceful beauty." At Incachee Plantation there is a wrought-iron basket made by a colored blacksmith for holding flaming fat-wood (pine) knots. I am covetous every time I see it. And in the plant of the Brunswick Marine Company, I am told, there are several mechanics trained in the old school who show unusual skill in metal-work.

During the last depression, when there was no work for the Negro cabinetmakers and carpenters, whittling was the inevitable pastime for Willy Rogers, of Darien and Lonnie Davis, of St. Simon's. (Illustrations 20 and 21). Both made a number of canes which were ornamented with alligators climbing their length. These wood carvings are obviously in line with West African tradition, and indicate that the sculptor's art is only dormant in the race. Given leisure enough to eat, and greater respect for his own mode of expression, the Negro might again take to the

A, [For Illustrations 20 & 21, see Categories 326 & 322, plate facing p. 113--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



forms of art in which his African forebears excelled. However, it must be kept in mind that *Art for Art's sake* never existed in the life of the African natives. Their dances and their music were not separated from daily life, and until about 1900 this attitude persisted among our Negroes in the rural sections. Now it is the fashion to imitate the white man, and the results are unspeakably dull.

Survivals, such as these I mention, have come to light—more or less as a side issue—in searching for links connecting the dances and songs of our Georgia Negroes with those of the African natives. As far as the songs are concerned, it would be gratifying to be able to say definitely what proportion of African influence is shown and what should be attributed to America. Unfortunately the methods of research employed today by most musicologists do not produce results that can be considered reliable. I would not accept as authoritative the findings of an anthropologist who based his conclusions concerning the African food tabu found in Georgia on what he learned from me. And I am no more willing to accept the word of the musicologist who depends on transcriptions found in books, and on inadequate phonograph records, to decide what the slave music owes to Europe.

In my experience transcriptions and records are both too susceptible to the biased interpretation of musicians trained in the European idiom. Far too many know nothing about African music, and do not care to learn anything about it at first-hand from the ex-slaves and their children. When they stop voicing the suspicion that the Negro spirituals derived their syncopation from Europe, probably from the Scottish folksong—then, and not before, shall I be ready to take their pronouncements seriously.

## *African Songs*

### FREEWILLUM

James Rogers (born in Liberty County) tells me this song, and the one following, were sung by Dublin Scribben. To use his own words: "Ole man Dublin he belong' to de Andersons o' Sunbury an' every day or two Miss Bertha would sen' me ober fo' him—to talk de ole African talk. I heered him, but I was too small to remember what he said, but I remember de songs 'cause I always p'int it on my mind about de t'ing." [51]

The first song did not sound like English, but when Rogers divorced the words

[51] Tunes mean far more to the Negroes than words, I notice, and are not easily forgotten.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## KNEE-BONE

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[46]
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Fanny Kemble, in her *Journal*, describes some shout songs—also used for rowing, through a suitable change of rhythm—in the following words:

> I told you formerly that I thought I could trace distinctly some popular national melody with which I was familiar in almost all their songs; but I have been quite at a loss to discover any such foundation for many that I have heard lately and which have appeared to me extraordinarily wild and unaccountable. The way in which the chorus strikes in with the burden, between each phrase of the melody, chanted by a single voice, is very curious and effective, especially with the rhythm of the rowlocks for accompaniment.

But if Fanny Kemble had visited Africa and heard a few of the native songs (such as can now be purchased in gramophone shops specializing in foreign records), she would not have been puzzled by those sung by her husband's slaves.

What was said in 1839 concerning these "unaccountable" songs applies equally well to the songs given in this Chapter. And they are sung today, much as they were then, by descendants of the singers Fanny Kemble mentions. Side by side with these semi-chants you hear songs which show clearly the white man's musical influence. The oldest Negroes say that they shouted after church Sunday afternoons and after prayer meeting at night. Before the shouting began, they sang spirituals and "lined out" hymns. The chances are that all three types were sung from the time the white man concerned himself with the religious instruction of his slaves. In Liberty County the members of the Midway community countenanced a revival in 1838, which lasted two years and was continued by the whites until 1842.

[177]
[196]

In the shout song, Knee-Bone, curious twists and exotic tones are employed—including the musical, yet nasal "ha-nnn"—that must be heard to be appreciated. None of our musical symbols is capable of suggesting the strange turns used in this, as well as others of the more primitive Afro-American chants. If records are not made soon, the elusive beauty which characterizes this type of singing will be irretrievably lost.

The shouter, in this musical chant, obeys instructions and bends the knee far down with the rhythm of the words "Bend my knee-bone to the ground." The rowing version calls for "knee-bone bend to the elbow bend." "Aye Lord" is often substituted for "Ha-nnn Lord."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533
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Knee-bone when I call you
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone when I call you
H-a-nnn Lord knee-bone bend.
Bend my knee-bone to the ground
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Bend my knee-bone to the ground
H-a-nnn Lord knee-bone bend.
Knee-bone Zachaniah
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone Zachaniah
H-a-nnn Lord knee-bone bend.
Knee-bone when I call you
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone when I call you
H-a-nnn Lord knee-bone bend.
Knee-bone didn't I call you
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone didn't I call you
Ha-ah Lord knee bone bend.
Knee-bone in the mornin'
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone in the mornin'
Ha-ah Lord knee-bone bend.
Knee-bone in the evenin'
H-a-nnn knee-bone
Knee-bone in the evenin'
Ha-ah Lord knee-bone bend.

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Creighton Churchill explains to me that when this song was used for rowing it could have had only one rhythmic accompaniment, the oars, since the other two rhythms, the hands and heels, would have thrown the rowers off their beat. To use his words: "The speed of the rowing version must also have been slower, for one could not possibly row to the rhythm of this version. It should be recognized as well that no musical meter known to man can represent exactly the rhythm of oars in their locks; in this song especially, it is something intangible and personal, like the beat of the Viennese waltz. For the sake of simplicity I have represented the rowing rhythm in this transcription as 2/8, 3/8, 3/8, equal to a full measure of time for the voices and other rhythms."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



ZION

533 585 Most Negro weddings, in church or out, are conducted, I am told, without music; but when Ben Davis was married, this song was used with telling effect in the Frederica African Baptist Church. Two ushers walked from the altar with lighted lamps in their hands, and met the bridal party at the door. Two little girls headed the procession and strewed flowers in its path. Ben, with the maid of honor, was followed by the bride on the arm of the best man. To the music of "O Zion—when the bridegroom comes," sung by the guests who filled the church, the participants moved to the altar, where the ushers put down their lamps, and Joe Lowman, the preacher, was waiting for them. When Lowman asked Ben: "Will you take this woman to be your wedded wife?" Ben spoke up "good and strong": "Yes suh!" When the same question was asked of Norah, her answer was very weak. This did not satisfy the parson: "Answer as though you mean it. This ain't for today and tomorrow, this is a lifetime business!" Everybody laughed. Lowman, after the usual procedure, offered a prayer and ended the ceremony by telling Ben to "salute the bride."

533 •(461) Besides being used in church and at praise meeting, I find "Zion" was one of the favorite rowing songs of the Butler oarsmen. Tall, lean Liverpool, who looks like an Arab sheik, showed us how he rowed to its rhythm:

533 539 585

Don't you be like the foolish virgin
When the bridegroom come
Don't you be like the foolish virgin
When the bridegroom come.

Chorus: O Zion
(Zion)
O Zion
(Zion)
O Zion
When the bridegroom come.

Have oil in your vessel
When the bridegroom come
Have oil in your vessel
When the bridegroom come.

(repeat chorus)

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

CHAPTER SIX

# *Work Songs*

In the old days, before Negroes rode to work in automobiles, they sang as they walked, and most of their tasks were lightened with song. One of my pleasantest memories is of hearing them singing in the early morning and at sundown, and—during the heat of the day—calling to each other across wide fields. The call was peculiar, and I always wondered how they came by such a strange form of vocal gymnastics, since I never heard a white person do anything like it. Years later I ran across a description of the trick in Natalie Curtis-Burlin's *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*. The author, in speaking of a Bantu rain song, calls attention to a passage which contains "an upward break in the voice, something like a Swiss yodel." Such field-calls are rarely heard today, although I am told they are still in use in the vicinity of the Okefenokee Swamp.

In the late eighteen-eighties, the Negroes in my home neighborhood—southern New Jersey—began to pattern their behavior after that of the silent white folk, and from that time on, little of their singing was heard. Farther south, this racial characteristic was later in disappearing. In 1901, Georgia Bryan Conrad tells us that, in her youth, "the Negroes were always singing," but adds regretfully: "Nothing is in greater contrast to that time than the quietness of the Negroes now." [1] However, there are remote places where they still sing at work. In factories where large numbers are employed in such monotonous jobs as shucking oysters or picking crabs and shrimp, rhythmic songs are used to relieve dullness. They are also sung wherever work is heavy, and concerted effort is required. In Brunswick, vessels are still loaded to the musical chant of "Sandy Anna"; freight cars at the sugar terminal are shunted for short distances to the rhythm of "Old Tar River," and the cabin in front of my house was moved on rollers from Kelvin Grove to the significant tune of "Pay Me My Money Down!"

[1] "Reminiscences of a Southern Woman," Southern Workman, 1901.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



as they hoisted and lowered the hogsheads and boxes of their cargoes; one man taking the burden of the song (and the slack of the rope) and the others striking in with the chorus. They would sing in this way more than a dozen different songs in an hour; most of which might indeed be warranted to contain "nothing religious"—a few of them, "on the contrary, quite the reverse"—but generally rather innocent and proper in their language, and strangely attractive in their music; and with a volume of voice that reached a square or two away. This plan of labor has now passed away, in Philadelphia at least, and the songs, I suppose, with it. So that these performances are to be heard only among black sailors on their vessels, or 'long-shore men in out-of-the-way places, where opportunities for respectable people to hear them are rather few.

Something of the African background of these "pure negro songs" may be gathered from a description of the work songs of West Africa, given by N. G. J. Ballanta, who tells us: "Music in Africa is not cultivated for its own sake. It is always used in connection with dances or to accompany workmen. The rhythmic interest of the songs impels them to work and takes away the feeling of drudgery." He goes on to say that work songs are "—mainly rhythmic—short phrases mostly of two or three bars; solo and chorus follow each other instantly; the chorus is in many instances composed of two or three ejaculatory words, answered by the workmen. Tempo moderate." This summary fits so many of the songs used by our stevedores that the connection is unmistakable.

The similarity between the songs of African workmen and those of their cousins in this country is also illustrated in some examples from the shipping docks of Beira, given by Natalie Curtis-Burlin. One of them, used by laborers in pushing or pulling heavy things, might have been sung on the docks of Brunswick. Another, like so many of the work songs of the American Negroes, was suggested by the particular job in hand, in this case, the literal translation runs: "Dawn—with freight—Yes, yes!—Dawn—with freight—Look for the label!"

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461

Among the Negroes, any song with the proper rhythm is used to accompany whatever work requires its help. While those of a religious character have always been the greatest favorites in our section,[3] the type of work is necessarily the determining factor. It is unlikely that a shanty could be used for rowing, or a rowing song for beating rice. In the old days, if no suitable verse came to mind for a particular task, one was made up then and there out of slender material. Fanny Kemble,

[3] It is interesting to notice that the religious songs used by the stevedores and other workmen are vastly superior to those heard in church and prayer meeting. The reason is self-evident: the latter have been dressed up to conform to the white folks' fashion.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



in her *Journal*, gave several illustrations which show how anything was grist for the Negroes' song-mill. With the rivers affording the only means of travel, it was natural that she should hear rowing songs of all kinds; and on one occasion she had the unique privilege of hearing her own praises extemporaneously chanted by her two Negro boatmen. They described her personal attractions, and amused her intensely by their repeated references to her "wire waist."[4]

Today the Negroes are less inventive, and generally confine themselves to a substitution of names or familiar lines in the old songs, but we can still hear examples of the way they utilized incidents or phrases that struck their fancy. If a captain said: "It's rough going 'round the Horn," the Negroes made up a song about the statement, and we had: "Go 'round the Horn, Yalla gal, Go 'round the Horn!" "Ragged Leevy," a waterfront character of Brunswick, was described in the shanty that bears his name. "Little Johnny Brown, fines' cap'n on Doboy Sound," was so popular among the stevedores that he figured in one of their jolliest shanties; and "Yonder come that *Hessie*" always brings a regretful feeling to those of us who remember the "good old days" on St. Simon's when the *Hessie* was our means of communication with the outside world, and the captain obligingly did our errands.

In our machine age it is inevitable that these work-songs should pass. Before they have entirely disappeared, records should be made of the few examples that have survived.

## SHANTIES

If anyone needs more information about the use of these shanties, I suggest that he apply to either Joe Armstrong or Henry Merchant of St. Simon's Island. Both were at one time leaders of stevedore crews, and both have told me the uses to which the different songs were put. Since I am a land-lubber and more interested in music than in the mechanics of loading lumber and stowing cotton, details concerning the latter have not stuck, while the tunes have—to the last note. Any mistake in describing their application is mine, not Joe's or Henry's.

In the early days of the lumber industry, great rafts of logs were nailed together, and—with two or three men in charge—were drifted down the Altamaha to the mills at its mouth.[5] Ships from everywhere came for the sawed lumber. Julia once

[4] African explorers with more knowledge of the native dialect than their boatmen realized were often entertained in the same manner, but their defects—not their charms—were derisively enumerated.

[5] Fanny Kemble mentions in her Journal that on one of her boat-trips from Darien she saw "The river . . . covered with Ocone [river] boxes." She describes them as monstrous square

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533 men, and the odd break on the top note before the singer suddenly dropped a whole octave. These must have been conventions, for since 1890 I have not heard
533 anybody except these two men use them. Floyd sings "Free at Last" with all the
505 ancient frills, and tells me the tune was used for "blockin' timber." Joe mentions
• 461 such technical lumber-loading terms as "wing-tier," which probably means just what the word implies, and "kelson knees," which the Oxford Dictionary defines as "a line of timber placed inside a ship along the floor timbers and parallel with the keel." The "beam-dog" is, I gather, a grappling-iron with a fang which clutches the log or piece of timber to be handled. "Block and tickle" means a system of pulleys by which this work was done. Joe learned such work as "narrow trunkin' "—stowing lumber in a peculiar way—from colored men who had been taught by Irish stevedores. The head stevedore was a white man who contracted to load a vessel for so much per thousand feet. Big ships employed four colored stevedores called "headers," [7] and used derricks; schooners needed only three headers—one outside and two inside. Short lumber went into the hatch, but for long lumber you had to "knock out the port," which was generally in the bow. In stowing cotton, the bale, as far as I could figure out, was lowered into the hold in a sling with three hooks attached, something like an ice-hook with an extra prong. Then it was rammed tightly into place by what "Cap'n" Joe [8] (Illustration 31) calls a "snilo"—a post against which the cotton jack was placed. "Pullin' lumber" meant shoving it on a long greased skid, waist high, made up of a series of carpenter's horses. There were generally four men at one end, and the same number at the other.

533 There are many shanties of which only fragments remain. One about the menu
461 of the captain indicates, as Miss Colcord tells us, that it might have originated on a slave ship in tropical waters:

[539]

What do you think he had for dinner?
Monkey soup an' gray molasses.
Blow, my bully boys, blow!

Floyd says it was used to "hist the gaff when the cap'n was ready to go to sea." He remembers another fragment which runs like this: "Clear the track an' let the bullgine back," and another:

[7] The "headers" were the stevedores responsible for the proper loading of a vessel.

[8] In plantation days the most important Negro slave was the "driver." His distasteful task was to see that the orders of the white overseer were carried out. As can be imagined the very name "driver" was unpopular, and after emancipation the Negro who had charge of a gang of laborers was called "Cap'n," and the old term is no longer heard.

[567]

A, [For Illustration 31, see Category 142, plate facing p. 193--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533
534

O bring me a 'gator
O gal when you come off the islan'.
A ring-tail' 'ator
O gal when you come off the islan'
A Darien 'gator
O gal when you come off the islan'

Let us hope that more of these rollicking songs can be retrieved. They have a flavor that is unique.

## CALL ME HANGIN' JOHNNY

[HK] [505]

This song was used in loading lumber, when six men on each side of the rope hauled on the block and tackle in putting a great "stick" [9] in place on board a vessel.

Call me hangin' Johnny
O hang boys hang.
You call me hangin' Johnny
O hang boys hang.
Yes, I never hang nobody
O hang boys hang.
I never hang nobody
O hang boys hang.
O we'll heave an' haul together
O hang boys hang.
We heave an' haul forever
O hang boys hang.
They hang my ole Grandaddy
O hang boys hang.
They hang him for his money
O hang boys hang.
O they hang him for his money
O hang boys hang.
They hang him for his money
O hang boys hang.
They call me hangin' Johnny
O hang boys hang.
O I never hang nobody
O hang boys hang.

[9] This is Joe's way of referring to a piece of timber 16" x 16", and 40' long.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533
539
461
506

SUNDOWN BELOW

This tune was sung at the end of the day as a hint to the captain, when the hold was too dark for the stevedores to see what they were doing:

Sun is down an' I mus' go
Sundown
Sundown below.
Sun is down in the hole below
Sundown
Sundown below.
I hear my captain say
Sundown
Sundown below.
Sun is down an' I mus' go
Sundown
Sundown below.

MY SOUL BE AT RES'

One a dese mornin's—it won't be long
My soul be at res'.
One a dese mornin's—it won't be long
My soul be at res'.
Be at res'—goin' be at res'
My soul be at res'.
Be at res' till Judgment Day
My soul be at res'.
It won't be long—it won't be long
My soul be at res'.
Be at res'—till Judgment Day
My soul be at res'.
One a dese mornin's—it won't be long
My soul be at res'.
Goin' t' hitch on my wings an' try the air
My soul be at res'.
One a dese mornin's—it won't be long
My soul be at res'.
You a'ks fo' me an' I'll be gone
My soul be at res'.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## ANNIEBELLE

533
461

Of all the shanties, this concerning Anniebelle appears to be adaptable to the most varied uses, and to be the most widely distributed. Joe tells me he learned it over forty years ago from the stevedores who loaded lumber on the vessels at the Hilton-Dodge mills, but its main use was for "spikin' steel" on the railroads. I notice, however, that he puts the song to equally good use in chopping wood or swinging the weed cutter. In the mines it is called a "hammerin' song."

533
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Anniebelle
Hunh!
Don't weep
Hunh!
Anniebelle
Hunh!
Don't moan
Hunh!
Anniebelle
Hunh!
Don't go
Hunh!
Leave home.
Hunh!
When I throw
Hunh!
My head
Hunh!
In the bar
Hunh!
Room doo'
Hunh!
I'll never
Hunh!
Get drunk
Hunh!
No mo'.
Hunh!
Don't want t' hurt nobody
Hunh!

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



O-h no
Hunh!
O-h no
Hunh!
Dis ole hammer [15]
Hunh!
Kill John Henry
Hunh!
Laid him low buddy
Hunh!
Laid him low.
Hunh!

533
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At this point Joe interpolated rhythmically: "Stan' by for another verse."

Ain't no hammer
Hunh!
In this mount'in
Hunh!
Ring like mine buddy
Hunh!
Ring like mine buddy.
Hunh!

Several years ago I heard the following version sung by Boogaloo, one of Darien's happy-go-lucky Negroes, as he cut weeds on the highway shoulders in front of Josephine's house. It was amusing to read in a recent issue of *Time* a letter from Mary J. Phillips telling of the explanation of the present war Boogaloo had given her husband. Mrs. Phillips quotes Boogaloo as saying: "Boss, I tells you what I thinks about this here war. Germany, some back, she starts a crap game, threw an eight, then falls off. Now she wants her money back and starts grabbing." I imagine that Boogaloo's speech was more consistent all through, but the thought is clearly his.

533
[461]

This is the hammer that kill John Henry
Tell 'im I'm dead, buddy, tell 'im I'm dead
Cap'n Smith what you reckon?
Ten-pound hammer kill John Henry
Kill' my buddy, Lord, but 'e can't kill me.

[539]

[15] Sometimes he specifies "nine-poun' hammer."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

533
461
142
291

32. St. Simon's Shanty Singers

[facing p 224]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## RICE SONGS

243
461
553

Growing rice was a thriving industry along the Ogeechee, Altamaha, and Satilla rivers a century ago, but today it is difficult to find even a handful of grain to demonstrate how it was beaten. At Hofwyl Plantation, the last in Glynn County to grow rice to any extent, I asked Jerry Rutledge about the songs that were used for planting rice, and getting it ready to eat. He gave me these appropriate lines:

[539]

John say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
John-say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
If you sow it in the rain, you got to reap it jus' the same
You got to reap in the harvest what you sow.

He explained how the rice sheaves, about a foot through, and tied with a twist of straw, were whipped with "frails"; they were laid in parallel rows on a large sheet on the floor with the butt ends out. When two Negroes "t'rashed" together, they always sang as they faced each other. The short part of the flail which flew in the air in a seemingly reckless fashion was called a "bob," and it was rather important to have its gyrations rhythmically controlled. As soon as one side of a sheaf was clear of rice it was turned over and the other side whipped. By the time the string was broken the grain was in a long row in the middle.

Julia Walker, born near Riceboro in Liberty County, gave me precisely the same description of the work, and sang the following song as she demonstrated how the "frail" was used. Frankly, I was skeptical of the strength of the rawhide that attached the bob to the stick, and kept well out of range:

[539]

Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
My Lord call you—wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late I know, sinner, too late.
Church bell ring—you wouldn't come
Preacher preach—an' you wouldn't come
My Lord call you—an' you wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late, sinner, too late.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



243 Julia said that when only a small amount of rice was to be thrashed, the grain
• 461 was stripped from the straw by hand, and put on a good clean floor. With a quick
(535) and effective dance step, the outer husk was scuffed off. On Sapelo the work was done to a similar step, with these words:

533 Peas an' the rice done done
539 Higho—Higho!
Beaufort boat done come
Higho—Higho!
How do you know—done heard it blow
Higho—Higho!

On St. Simon's, Julia Armstrong sings still another version:

New rice an' okro—Nana—Nana![18]
Eat some an' leave some—Nana—Nana!
Beat rice to bum-bum
Eat some an' leave some.

I am told that Old Adam Proctor hoed rice to the tune of:

Way over yonder in that new bright worl'
Poo' sinner got a home at las'

and tied up the sheaves to:

Do Lord remember me—Do Lord remember me
Way over in Beulah Lan'—Do Lord remember me.

(535) A shout song was often used for the rice dance. The following lines indicate how the rhythm changed. While walking around in a circle with a preliminary scuffle, the "t'rashers" sang the slow part as in shouting.

Sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.
Sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.

[18] According to Dr. Turner, "nana" means grandmother.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533
539

You know the way an' you wouldn't come home
Yes Lord, I know the way.
Every sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.

[535] The faster part was sung as two hops were made on one foot while the other did the scuffing.

Make a jump, jump for joy!
Make a jump, jump for joy!

This phrase was repeated over and over, with the variation:

Sheep jump, jump for joy!

243 The planters believed that rice was only good when freshly beaten,[17] and the sheaves kept for family use were put in a well-ventilated mouse-proof loft. The commercial rice was threshed in a mill, but the husks were left on, and even in cities, in the South, the rice was beaten fresh every day. The mortars were generally hollowed out of cypress or hard pine logs and used upright, although on Sapelo I have seen some made of immense pieces of squared timber laid flat so that the beating took place against the grain. The pestles had two ends, one sharp for bruising the husks and removing them, the other flat for whitening. Boys or women generally did the beating. They would grasp the pestles in the middle, raising and letting them fall so quickly and evenly, to the rhythm of what was more like a chant than a song, that the task was not considered difficult.

[412]

[461]

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171

[17] William Ellis in his History of Madagascar, 1838, makes it clear that our early rice planters got their ideas about the culture and preparation of rice for the table directly from Madagascar. In Seed from Madagascar Duncan Clinch Heyward tells us that the seed of the Carolina Gold rice was brought from that land by a sea captain about the year 1685, but Mr. Ellis furnishes the African end of the picture. After describing planting and harvesting methods, he explains the laborious process by which rice was made ready for cooking. "The rice, which is kept in the husk in a sort of granary, is made ready for use in such quantities only as the daily consumption of the family may require." In minute detail he explains that it is then beaten in a mortar by two people using large wooden pestles, about five feet in length, so as to break and remove the outer husk without breaking the grain. The rice is taken out, and separated from the husk by winnowing; it is then beaten in the mortar a second time for the purpose of taking off the inner skin. The process is repeated a third time; tossed again in the winnowing-fan, then washed and cooked. It was reported by Francis Moor that on the West Coast of Africa men worked the corn ground, and women and girls the rice ground. Jobson, another West African traveler, says: "the wives do all the hard labor such as cleaning and pounding rice . . . which is done in mortars with great staves." One explorer mentioned that rice was so plentiful in Kongo and Angola that it hardly bears any price.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## A. B. A. B. A.

The rhythm of this nonsensical Butler Island song enables the rice beaters to do work which would otherwise be extremely tiresome.[20] It continues as long as the work lasts, with no change in rhythm and very little in the words.

Uncle July mortal man, stan' right by de doo'
An' see how y'r rice done mash.[21]
An' A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A. B. A.
Go A. B. go
Go A. B. go
July'll cut y'r win'.
A. B. A. B. A.
A. B. A. B. A.
An' July'll cut y'r win'.
July de mortal man
July cut y'r win'.
A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A.
Go Lizzy go, Billy goin' t' cut y'r win'.
Go Emma go, Gally goin' t' cut y'r win'.

[20] Mrs. Cate tells me that each plantation had its particular songs for beating rice, just as its rowing songs were unlike those of other plantations.

[21] The footnote on page 232 suggests that the "reckless" Africans pounded rice in the same careless fashion.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



### I GWINE T' BEAT DIS RICE

533 243 "J. P." learned this half-chanted composition from his grandfather, Old Quarterman. He never sings the words twice alike, but the rhythm is always the same.

533 539

I gwine t' beat dis rice
Gwine t' beat 'um so
Gwine t' beat 'um until the hu'ks come off
Ah hanh hanh (nasal)
Ah hanh hanh.
Gwine t' cook dis rice when I get through
Gwine t' cook 'um so
Ah hanh hanh.
Ah hanh hanh.
Gwine f' eat mh belly full
Ah hanh hanh
Ah hanh hanh.

### ROWING SONGS

501 533 461 175 A hundred years ago, when boats offered the most comfortable and convenient mode of transportation, and provided the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia with their only means of communication with the mainland, the rowing songs were an important adjunct to the work of the oarsmen. English travelers rarely failed to mention them. Captain Basil Hall in his *Travels in North America* (1827–28) tells of leaving Darien—"A neat little village"—and proceeding down the current to St. Simon's Island "in a canoe, some thirty feet long, hollowed out of a cypress tree. The oars were pulled by five smart negroes, merry fellows and very happy looking. . . . They accompanied their labor by a wild sort of song not very unlike that of the Canadian voyageurs, but still more nearly resembling that of the well-known Bunder-boatmen of Bombay." [22]

Fanny Kemble frequently mentioned the singing of the Butler Island oarsmen in her *Journal*, written ten years later. In 1845, Sir Charles Lyell [23] tells of being met at Darien by Mr. Hamilton Couper, who came down the river from Hopeton "in a

[191]

[22] The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* say that "Mr. E. S. Philbrick was struck with the resemblance of some of the rowing tunes at Port Royal to the boatmen's songs he had heard upon the Nile."

[23] Second Visit to the United States.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



long canoe, hollowed out of the trunk of a single cypress and rowed by six negroes, who were singing loudly and keeping time to the stroke of their oars." He went on to say: "For many a mile we saw no habitations, and the solitude was profound; but our black oarsmen made the woods echo to their song. One of them taking the lead, first improvised a verse, paying compliments to his master's family, and to a celebrated black beauty of the neighborhood, who was compared to the 'red bird.' The other five then joined in the chorus, always repeating the same words. Occasionally they struck up a hymn, in which the most sacred subjects were handled with strange familiarity, and which, though nothing irreverent was meant, sounded oddly to our ears, and, when following a love ditty, almost profane."

Lyell's account of his canoe trip from Hopeton to visit Mr. Couper's summer residence on St. Simon's Island, fifteen miles distant, is of interest for several reasons. In describing the Negro houses on Butler Island, where the party landed on their way, he tells us they "were neat, and whitewashed, all floored with wood, each with an apartment called the hall, two sleeping rooms, and a loft for the children"—which is contrary to what Fanny Kemble had written about the selfsame houses a few years earlier. He also mentioned seeing ricks of rice raised on props five feet high, to protect them from the sea, which, during hurricanes, has been known to rise five or six feet. His observations on the mental development of the slaves are particularly significant: "It is evident that on these rice farms, where the negroes associate with scarcely any whites, except the overseer and his family, and have but little intercourse with the slaves of other estates, they must remain far more stationary than where, as in a large part of Georgia, they are about equal in number to the whites, or even form a minority. . . . In Glynn County, where we are now residing, there are no less than four thousand negroes to seven hundred whites,[24] whereas in Georgia generally there are only 281,000 in a population of 691,000 or more whites than colored people."

I give these figures because they explain why more distinctive slave songs can be found in the rice swamps and cotton plantations of the adjoining sea islands than in the Piedmont section where Anglo-Saxon influence has always predominated. In all probability we have the malaria mosquito and the absentee landlords to thank for this. In Africa the black race had developed an immunity to malaria—which they

[24] About the same ratio as when I first went to St. Simon's. Charles Spalding Wylly states that in 1810 almost every acre of arable land on St. Simon's was under cultivation. There were fourteen plantations and a slave population of about 1200.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



184 114 out this section is not surprising to those who have studied its social and economic conditions at first hand—or have carefully read *Seed from Madagascar* by Duncan Clinch Heyward. This gentleman's words are authoritative. He learned planting 114 methods and the management of Negro labor at first hand on the Combahee swamp plantations of his paternal ancestors in South Carolina and at the Clinch Plantation, called Refuge, on the Satilla River in Georgia, where his maternal ancestors were also rice planters.

In *American Humor*, Constance Rourke quotes a traveler as saying in 1795 175 522 533 that "The blacks are the great humorists of the nation." She goes on to tell us how Negro humor has always been abundant, and how, from it, early minstrels drew as from a primal source. She also says that many minstrels had lived in the South and West and knew the Negro at first hand. One of them saw an old peddler of watermelons with a donkey cart in a Georgia town, and followed him about until he had mastered his lingo, cries, and snatches of song, which may account for the similarity 175 533 of our Negro secular songs to those of the minstrel stage. Few of the white singers, however, gave credit where it was due. Miss Rourke states that "Plantation owners on the Mississippi had crews of black oarsmen who sang as they rowed and impro- 501 vised good-natured verses to match the occasions of the day. . . .[28] A western poet 461 declared that 'among the earliest original verses of the West were sundry African 567 melodies celebrating the coon hunt and the vicissitudes of river navigation.' The Negro was to be seen everywhere in the South and in the new Southwest, on small farms and great plantations, on roads and levees. He was often an all but equal member of many a pioneering expedition. He became, in short, a dominant figure in spite of his condition and commanded a definite portraiture."

533 199 Because of his position in democratic communities it is readily seen why the songs of the Negro have left their stamp on those of the hill-billy and the cowboy; and when he attended the same revival meetings as the whites—as he frequently did —his mode of singing undoubtedly exerted as much influence upon their religious songs as his secular music does today upon our radio singers.

[28] *They carried on a tradition that was characteristic of the South Carolina and Georgia coast. Liverpool, who was stroke oar of the Butler Island crew of ten men, told me they rowed a cypress dugout, thirty-three feet long, made from one immense log. His favorite rowing song was "Zion," but others preferred "Knee-bone." Mrs. G. V. Cate tells us, in* Our Todays and Yesterdays, *"there was a spirit of rivalry among the planters to have the best boat . . . and a desire on the part of the slaves to sing the best songs. The oarsmen of one plantation would never sing the songs belonging to another plantation," and when a boat passed at night it would be known from the song to what plantation the singers belonged.*

171 *In* A Walk across Africa, *Grant describes a very large canoe—hollowed out of an immense tree—that carried a ton and a half.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## OH WHEN I COME TO DIE

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[461]

When Willis was a child and went to Lonesome Point for fish and oysters with his father, Adam Proctor, this is the song they often used to make the rowing easier. It is recognized, of course, that the rhythm had to be readjusted to the stroke of the oar. Josephine Young says the song was also used "down on our knees, for watch night 'n prayin'." Needless to say, she would have left off the final g in "dying."

Chorus: O when
(O when)
O when
(O when)
O when I come to die
Give me Jesus.

When I am dying
When I am dying
When I am dying my Lord
Give me Jesus.

(repeat chorus)

When the doctor give me over
When the doctor give me over
When the doctor give me over my Lord
Give me Jesus.

(repeat chorus)

When my friends forsake me
When my friends forsake me
When my friends forsake me my Lord
Give me Jesus.

(repeat chorus)

When trouble is over
When trouble is over
When trouble is over my Lord
Give me Jesus.

(repeat chorus)

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## MISCELLANEOUS WORK SONGS

533 461 By this time the reason for placing this chapter at the end of the collection must be obvious. Practically any of the foregoing songs were utilized in one kind of labor or another. The shout songs were peculiarly adapted to rowing; and certain of the religious songs were suited to the stevedore's need of a swinging tune in work that was continuous. There were, however, other tasks which required a special rhythm, dependent oftentimes upon the mood of the laborer, and these occasions were likely to bring forth extemporaneous compositions. Mrs. Shadman told me (296) that laundresses generally sang while ironing, and this is one of the improvisations she had heard:

[539]

Do tu'key buzzard len' me y'u wing
T' fly ova yonda t' see Miss Geo'gia King.

(234) (539) She had also heard churning done to these coaxing words:

Come budda come, Missus want e budda, come budda come.

533 461 296 But it was over the wash-board that a singer gave free scope to a religious turn of mind. Some years ago a Northern Negro composer, unfamiliar with the traditional songs of his race, heard the following spiritual sung by a washerwoman while at work. She claimed she had made it up; he innocently believed her, and told reporters that new spirituals are born every day. No one wishes more sincerely than I that such might be the case, but this particular song was sung in Glynn County long before he was born. It is Joe's favorite for swinging the weed cutter:

533 539

By an' by-e I'm goin' t' see the King
By an' by-e I'm goin' t' see the King
By an' by-e I'm goin' t' see the King
Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' if dyin' was all.

Wouldn' mind dyin' but I got t' go by myself
Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' but I got t' go by myself
O Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' but I got t' go by myself
Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' if dyin' was all.[27]

[27] A variation of this verse is expressed in these words:

*Wouldn' mind dyin' but I got t' lay in the grave so long*
*Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' if dyin' was all.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



533
539

After death I got to stan' a tes'
After death I got to stan' a tes'
Oh Lordy, after death I got to stan' a tes'
Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' if dyin' was all.

533
461
264
[191]

Dishwashing is another of the monotonous jobs which invite the accompaniment of flowing song. In my own kitchen I have heard dishes disposed of to a tune which, surprisingly enough, has an Algerian counterpart. I heard it first, from my hotel on the heights of Constantine, played on a primitive pipe in the little Berber village at the base of the cliff far below. It was repeated over and over—that is why I am familiar with it. Apparently, the tune bothered a cow, for her bellowing frequently gave me a respite. The air is lovely, but when heard by the hour it is not so enjoyable.

[539]

I want a die easy when I die
O when I die.
I want a die easy when I die
I want a die easy when I die—Shout salvation as I fly
I want a die easy when I die.

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Until after the War Between the States stoves were unknown in the South, and cooking was done mostly in large fireplaces with cranes and hooks for hanging pots and kettles over the heat. Meat was roasted in "tin kitchens" placed in front of the fire, although the remains of an enormous brick oven at Cannon's Point indicate the part it played in the large-scale hospitality of the Couper family. Cooking, in fact, was one of those interrupted jobs which required undivided attention, and for that reason, perhaps, I never heard of a good cook who sang.

248
527
461
[412]
[533]

On St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands great quantities of cotton were grown. The best description of the process was given by Captain Basil Hall in 1828. He tells how the "task" varied with the heaviness of the work. In describing the "listing" of the ground—breaking it with a broad cotton-field hoe—he said that "a full hand lists half an acre." Janey Jackson must have been a full hand, for she told of doing her half-acre and thinking nothing of it. She and Floyd White's parents belonged to the Caters, and both sang a tune which was a favorite for hoeing cotton. They agreed that "June month was a ha'd month": the weeds grew fast and the sun was hot.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



the meal fell into a basket, but I still cannot see how this was possible when the stones were circular. Belle says that her mill was set up in a box and the meal fell into it.

I go into detail because no one has told me so clearly as Belle how the work was done. She obligingly sold me the mill that came from Butler's Point where she was born, and said: "I wish I had a dollar for every mess of grits I've ground in it." Lonnie Davis says he knows how to set it up, and soon I hope to be grinding enough meal at the Cabin to supply Belle's needs and mine.

A colored man who used to be a "shack-rouser" at a railroad camp on the Georgia Central Line sang these warning lines before he gave the rat-a-tat-tat, with a stick, on the different doors.

Wake up buddy
An' sit on the rock
It ain't quite day
But it's four o'clock
Rata-tat-tat!

Next door:

Hey buddy
It's hard but it's fair
You had a good home
But you wouldn't stay there
Rata-tat-tat!

And the next:

I had a little kitten
He grow to be a mouser
Yonder come
That cruel shack-rouser
Rata-tat-tat!

Shad Hall, who lives on Sapelo, showed me how the conch was blown in olden times to get the hands out to work before day. It was a joy to find that the musical note I had heard on the Riviera was used in this country in spite of Thomas Spalding's dislike of music. His antipathy was such that he banned all instruments—except one fiddle which was retained for dancing. It is just possible that Mr. Spalding's attitude resulted in the same reaction among the Sapelo Negroes as was seen among those of the Quaker community in which I was born. In neither section did the Negroes hear much of the white folks' music, and for that reason, perhaps, they relied upon their traditional tunes more than they would have otherwise.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island



## DRINKIN' OF THE WINE

533 The swinging rhythm of the communion song, "Drinkin' of the Wine," made 697 it a favorite with the chain-gang for cutting weeds along the highway. The afternoon [461] I heard it sung by convicts in front of my house, there were no chains to be seen or heard. When I asked the guard the reason, he told me they were used only to enforce camp discipline. The prisoners had been on their good behavior that week, and the chains had been left off.

697 I mentioned the incongruity of wearing stripes[30] and singing spirituals. He 771 laughed and said the prisoners got very religious while in camp. It is a fact, however, that the Negro takes his religion very seriously, and, given time for meditation—enforced though it be—quite naturally reacts in this way. Then, too, he apparently 577 has a different concept of morality from white people, and in consequence the idea 673 prevails among us that he does not put his religion into practice. But, for that 685 matter, who does? Each race seems to have its own particular blind spot, and inability to recognize the sanctity of property appears to the white man to be the hereditary weakness of the Negroes in this country, as in Africa. Before the white man meddled with their lives, it was considered legitimate business for the inhabitants of one community to steal from another. Up to the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, I am told, many a slave held the ingenious idea that property could not steal from property. It is possible that this notion, coupled with the viewpoint inherited from Africa,[31] may account for the tolerance still shown by the Negro toward the light-fingered members of the race who run afoul of the law.

000 According to a *London Morning Post* correspondent at Nairobi, capital of Kenya: "To the native mind there is nothing morally wrong in thefts of stock from other natives and from European farmers." This is possibly the reason why it is hard to get our primitive Negro to see that it is wrong to take a chicken from the roost when he is hungry, or a shirt off the clothes-line when he is half-naked. The same

[30] *The "liters" wear a plain drab suit and the lesser offenders, stripes. It should be the other way about. When convicts escape, as they often do, protective coloration gives the advantage to those who should not have it.*

[31] *In Astley's Collection, John Leo is quoted as saying that the Negroes on and between the Senegal and Gambia rivers lived in common. They had no property in land, but supported themselves in equal state, upon the natural produce of the country. Seagrave also comments on the fact there is no property in ground. The king's license is obtained and the people then go out in troops, and first clear the ground from bushes and weeds which they burn, "and so continue to work in a body for the public benefit, till every man's ground is tilled and sowed."* [171]

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



175
249

indigo. The five who raised indigo made a net profit of $225 more than the five who cultivated cotton. In 1845 Thomas W. Glover, of Orangeburgh, wrote for the *Report on the Geology of South Carolina* a detailed statement concerning the cultivation and manufacture of indigo.[15] South Carolina indigo was then selling from 40 to 80 cents a pound, and the average production varied from twenty-nine to sixty pounds an acre.

The cultivation of indigo, however, was a precarious undertaking. The soil had to be well prepared before planting; the furrows weeded thoroughly; the caterpillars kept off the plants; the stalks cut with a special kind of hook and handled cautiously in being carried to the vats to prevent the bluish bloom from being rubbed off the leaves; the fermentation closely watched; and the introduction of lime water carefully regulated to produce the best quality of dye. After one had painstakingly watched over his crop from the preparation of the soil to the daily turning of the squares of paste in the drying house, he might even then lose his entire output by its sweating and rotting in the barrels.

Nevertheless, sea-island planters were willing to take the risk as long as Great Britain was paying a bounty, for an acre of virgin land often produced about eighty pounds of good indigo. "One slave may manage Two Acres and upwards," wrote Governor Glen, "and raise Provisions besides, and have all the Winter Months to saw Lumber and be otherwise employed in."[16] Thus the production of

175
567
461
249

[15] M. Tuomey, *Report on the Geology of South Carolina*, pp. xxiii-xxiv. A writer in *DeBow's Review* for 1850, (VIII, 495), also urges the cultivation of indigo.

[16] Carroll, *Historical Collections*, II, 204-205.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



175 589 461 249

indigo on St. Helena Island did not interrupt the manufacture of naval stores which was the first occupation of the settlers. After the indigo crop had been laid by, the slaves were employed in "sawing Lumber and making Hogsheads and other Staves, to supply the Sugar Colonies." Indigo culture fitted in so well with the accustomed regime of the settlers that they continued to raise it despite the uncertain returns.

### INTRODUCTION OF SEA-ISLAND COTTON

175 248

The Revolution virtually cut off the market for indigo and, of course, put an end to the British bounty. The steeping vats had for a long time been considered an additional menace to health in this already unhealthy region.[17] At the same time a new staple, sea-island cotton, which offered fabulous profits, began to be raised in the tidewater region. The seed known in Georgia and South Carolina as sea-island cotton came from the Bahama Islands where it had been introduced by the Board of Trade from Anguilla, an island of the Caribbean Sea.

Several Georgia planters experimented with the seed in 1786, among whom were Thomas Spalding and Alexander Bisset whose plants although sturdy did not ripen pods. Two years later, however, Alexander Bisset exported the first bag of sea-island cotton grown in the United States.[18] To the gratified surprise of the Georgia planters, the fruit yielded a finer fiber than that grown in

[17] *Southern Agriculturist*, Feb., 1828. William Elliott, in his article on indigo, states that he will not admit that the steeping vats "impair the health of the country until I can find that our country has become healthier since the Indigo culture has been superseded by that of Cotton. But I readily admit, that the steeping vats must be unpleasant in those sections where the settlements are thick."

[18] Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, *Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, pp. 18, 19; *DeBow's Review*, I, 304.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



The basis of work on a sea-island cotton plantation was the task. In time the term came to signify a quarter of an acre laid out 105 by 105 feet. The acre was laid out square, 210 by 210 feet. A day's work for a full hand depended upon the time of year and the kind of work he was doing. When listing, the full hand's task was a quarter of an acre. Listing was the first process of preparing the land for cotton after the field had been manured, and consisted of hoeing the grass off the old bed into the alleys. Next the old beds were hauled on top at the rate of a quarter of an acre a day to the full hand. When a plow was used, as it seldom was, the hands followed with hoes, finishing off the beds at the rate of three tasks a day, or three-fourths of an acre. A plowman's allotment was usually four tasks, or an acre a day.

When the bed had been made, two hands made holes the width of the hoe cross-wise on the top of it at intervals of about eighteen inches. Another hand followed, scattering ten or fifteen seeds in each hole, while two other hands covered them to a depth of about an inch and a half, patting the soil down. Since this was light work the day's assignment in this process was usually three tasks.

A day's work at hoeing after the cotton came up was ordinarily two tasks. Picking, which was done generally by the women and children, was accomplished at the rate of about ninety to a hundred pounds a day for a full hand. The task at assorting was from thirty to fifty pounds of seed cotton a day, at ginning from twenty to thirty pounds a day, at moting from thirty to fifty pounds a day.

The tasks involved in plantation work as laid down

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



567
46
241

for Weehaw plantation near Georgetown, which were also observed on St. Helena plantations, were as follows:[21]

Corn: Sowing done in gang. Covering done in gang.
Hoeing ¼-acre Hauling up ½ acre.
Plowing corn 2½ to 3 acres; a man & mule will tend 30 acres. Stripping fodder ¾ acre on first day—after that strip 1 acre & carry home that of the previous day.

Potatoes & Slips:
Planting—3 [hands] in a ¼ acre, who also bed it up.
Hoeing—2 in a ¼ acre. Hauling up 20 Compass.[22]
Digging slips—men, 5 rows—Women, 4 rows & carry home.
Digging roots for allowance—5 to 7 rows, as they bear.
Weeding is usually done by the shufflers.[23]

Peas: 3 hands to 3 acres when planted between corn.
Harvesting—2 large blankets.

Ditching . . . 6 to 8 tasks. Spreading straw[24]—if wet ½ acre.
if dry ¾ acre. Listing in straw—½ acre.

Getting task stakes, 500 to a hand[25]

Splitting Rails—100 Rails 12 ft long & heavy

Cutting Wood—1 cord. . . .

Splitting garden railings—500 to 3 men. . . .

Cutting down & piling up corn stalks, 1 to 1¼ to 1½ acres.

Digging ditches . . . —600 cubic feet.

The tasks at cutting marsh grass and digging marsh mud for fertilizing the fields were estimated by the cart load and varied with the weather and the distance of the marsh from the field.

(804)

[21] Henry A. Middleton, Jr., Weehaw Plantation Book.
[22] A compass was five feet as measured by a wooden triangle called a compass.
[23] Children or superannuated men and women.
[24] On St. Helena plantations marsh grass was used instead of the rice straw spread on the Weehaw fields.
[25] Each hand's task was staked off.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

CHAPTER VII

# THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

## THE SLAVE AND THE LASH

THE EVERY-DAY life of the slave people on a St. Helena plantation was by no means crowded with constant toil. In the late spring when the cotton had to be hoed at the critical stages and again in the autumn when the cotton was in "good blow" they might work from "day clean" to "fust dark," but these were unusual periods, and, as a reward for the extra labor, their masters dealt out choice rations of molasses and meat and passed around presents of tobacco and gay headcloths. The ordinary task of a full hand kept him in the field only four or five hours a day so that the "smart" ones were habitually through by two o'clock. Only the "t'ick headed" remained as late as five. The rest of the day was theirs to spend as they chose.

A southern youth, Hamilton Couper, who had spent all his life on his father's sea-island cotton and rice plantation on the Georgia coast was surprised to find the white servants working so hard in New Haven where he was attending Yale. The Irish maid-of-all-work in his rooming house, so he wrote to his mother, "does more than any servant I have ever seen."[1] The Honorable Amelia Murray of England who visited Couper's parents at their Hopeton plantation was also impressed with the difference in work required of the southern slave and the northern "saucy help." "I never saw servants in any old English family," she observed, "more comfortable, or more de-

[1] Couper-Wylly Papers. Hamilton Couper to Mrs. J. H. Couper, 1846.

[p. 124]

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



her husband's pails which they took to the field with them for dinner.[36] 567 224

If the wife were frugal, she might have a portion of the weekly rations left when Monday came around again, and these she might either feed to her pigs and chickens or sell to the overseer or to an island storekeeper. The money was hers to use for the good of the family, but it was hers, nevertheless. It was the woman of the family who, with the aid of her children, worked most of the family patch, and it was usually the woman who marketed the produce and pocketed the money received in exchange. 567 462 432 [231] [434]

The planters helped to make of woman the dominant sex in the family life of the slave by the position which they gave her in the plantation regime. The cabin was hers. The children, too, were listed on the plantation records as belonging to the mother. Seldom was the father's name indicated. Thus a person might go through life known as Binah's Toby or Moll's July. Likewise the mother had the privilege of naming the new baby unless she graciously yielded the right to its father or to a friend or relative. In this right she often exercised a singular taste, for one child might be called Jupiter, another Quash, a third January, and a fourth Hard Times. 567 562 [551] [553] [551]

Miss Towne was amused at the jealousy of their "natural rights" which the men on St. Helena Island began to show after that region had come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army during the Civil War. "Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of," she 562 593

[36] Some planters, as it has already been pointed out, delegated plantation cooks to prepare the noon meal for the field hands so that they might have something hot to eat at this time. Some planters also allowed an hour's rest at nine o'clock for breakfast. [461]

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



Obviously, there was not the opportunity for home life in the slave family that there was in the free family, nor was meal time the institution that it was in the white family, for there was rarely to be found in the slave cabin a "family table."[32] Some observers of slave life thought also that there was little family affection among them. Edward S. Philbrick wrote to a friend that there was far less family affection and attachment among members of slave families than existed among the Irish peasants, adding, however, that he did not know "how much allowance to make for their being so much less demonstrative in their emotions, and more inured to suffering."[33]

### LEISURE TIME

When task was done, the slave was his own master within the limits of plantation regulation. He might go home to work on his piece of ground, tend his pigs and chickens, play with his children, or fish in the creek. The slave had several ways of making money for his own use, in which he was encouraged by his master. As has already been pointed out, the black people ordinarily supplied their masters with chickens and eggs for which they usually received the market price.[34] They often sold their hogs and the truck from their garden patches; they wove baskets, and made boats and canoes. An overseer on the Butler plantation on St. Simon's Island said that he regularly allowed a certain number to go to town on Sundays

[32] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Records*, sup., I, 304. "Except on Sundays, these people do not take their meals at a family table, but each one takes his hominy, bread, or potatoes sitting on the floor or on a bench, and at his own time. They say their masters never allowed them any regular time for meals." In this connection see *supra*, p. 137n.

[33] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 15.

[34] *Supra*, p. 86.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



to dispose of eggs, coopers' wares and canoes, but required that they be home by twelve o'clock unless by special permission.[35] When it became illegal for a slave to hold personal property, the master, overseer, storekeeper, and slave all found ample means of evading the law as the cases arising on this statute indicate. Masters often paid their people for extra work done on the plantation, such as, gathering corn blades for fodder or collecting rice straw. Miss Mary B. Elliott, of Beaufort, gave her slaves 5 cents a pound for blades.[36] The master also gave them presents of money, especially at Christmas or New Year.

By thus being permitted to possess personal property of his own, the slave felt his condition to be less abject. Some planters tried to help their people to accumulate more than they could ordinarily obtain through the sale of "nigger truck" so that they might have some degree of independence. James Hamilton Couper set apart a field for the benefit of twenty-five picked men and allowed them half of their Saturday's labor in which to work it. He required all to work faithfully in the common field during the first year, and at the end of that time divided the $1,500 arising from the sale of the crop equally among them. But when they were left to work the field as they chose, they did very little and at the end of two years abandoned it entirely.[37]

While some slaves wisely spent their money for comforts which the master did not provide, others laid out their pittances in indulgences: liquor, tobacco, and fancy

[35] "On the Management of the Butler Estate," *Southern Agriculturist*, Dec., 1828.

[36] Elliott Account Book.

[37] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 268.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



567
432
511

clothes. An English visitor at Hopeton noticed that whenever the mistress paid a visit to Savannah she was overwhelmed with commissions from her slaves who wished to obtain the latest fads in articles of dress, "of which they are passionately fond." "The stuff must be of the finest quality, and many instructions are given as to the precise color or fashionable shade. White muslin, with figured patterns, is the rage just now."[338]

567
461
226

The Negro spent a part of his spare time in simple recreation. Indeed, many masters thought that he spent most of it that way. If a tidal creek bordered the plantation, as was true of most plantations on St. Helena Island, the master permitted his people to fish freely for crabs, shrimp, bass, whiting, and catfish, sometimes, however, reserving for his own use the choicest sea foods, such as shrimp and whiting. It was seldom that a master permitted his people to go at will in boats upon the creeks, and only by special permission could they go upon the Sound for one of the most exciting of all water sports, drum fishing. In the fishing season, it was customary for the master to commission a certain number, usually three or four picked men, to do the drum fishing for the week, the fish, of course, being intended for the master's table. But when the men came in with a big catch, probably as many as five or six twenty-five pound fish, the fishermen not only had their reward from the catch, but the steaks were distributed among all the people as well. The slaves invariably considered the head the choice part of the fish. Even today it is not difficult to start an argument over who shall claim the head when a fish is about to be divided.

[338] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, p. 265.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island



grades. The school was equipped with blackboards, charts, and maps, and in most cases provided the pupils with books and slates. After Miss Towne's death in 1901, Miss Murray carried on the work of the school until 1904 when Miss Rossa B. Cooley and Miss Grace B. House, teachers at Hampton Institute in Virginia, took over the work, and the curriculum was enlarged to include industrial and agricultural training similar to that offered by Hampton.

As in slavery the laborer had stopped work at noon Saturday and declared a holiday until Monday morning, so did the freedman. Saturday afternoon saw the island roads lined with pedestrians and carts, for each head of the family, regardless of where he lived, felt that he must pay a visit to "Corner Store" or even go to Beaufort. Saturday night was the time for general merriment, a dance for non-church members, a sing or a shout for those who were. Miss Towne complained in 1876 that on Frogmore plantation where she lived the people were beginning to have parties on other nights of the week as well. "Last night," she wrote, "our boys went to a party again, and to-day they are sleeping it out. We have issued the edict, 'No more parties this winter,' for there is arising among the Frogmore young men a constant desire for gayety,—suppers, etc., that we intend to begin to frown upon. They are flush just now, and are spending too much. They are all temperance parties, which is one good thing."[183]

Although there were occasions when people from all parts of the Island assembled together, as on Saturday afternoons at Corner Store, at church on Sunday mornings,

[183] *Letters and Diary*, p. 257.